

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 13, 2005

The Honorable David M. Walker
Comptroller General
U.S. General Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Comptroller General Walker:

In recent days, it's been reported that the Department of Education paid \$240,000 to a syndicated columnist and talk show host named Armstrong Williams to promote the No Child Left Behind law on his show and his columns, and also to encourage other African American journalists to do the same.

We are writing to request the General Accountability Office to investigate this matter and provide answers to the following questions:

- (1) Did the Bush Administration's payments to Armstrong Williams violate a ban on the use of government funds for propaganda purposes?
- (2) Who in the Department of Education should be held accountable for making the decision for this expenditure of funds?
- (3) Have there been other instances in other federal agencies in which this administration has used payments to journalists, commentators, or talk show hosts to publicly endorse or advocate for other policies or positions supported by the administration?

The ethical and legal issues raised by these payments are very troubling. Aside from the fact that they may well represent an illegal use of taxpayer dollars, they appear to be intended to deceive the public.

We hope you will give this request your immediate attention.

Sincerely,


Byron L. Dorgan
U.S. Senator


Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator